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XII

INITIATION CEREMONIES

881 THE course of initiation ceremonies has been already summarized in Chapter VII. Except in reference to the southern tribes, where there are esoteric objects such as the bull-roarer and the sacred flute, it must be allowed that the word 'initiation' is used somewhat loosely. All the tribes, however, possess certain ceremonies, usually performed about the age of puberty, which are virtually *rites de passage*, and which convert the candidate (boy or girl) into an *ehamei* or 'new child'. These may be conveniently called ceremonies of initiation. They are usually the occasions of large festivals, and a number of candidates of varying age are passed through them together. I shall proceed to describe the initiation ceremonies in their successive stages.

Initiation

The first stage is that of the initiation proper, viz. the entering into the secret of the bull-roarer and the flute, and this, as we have seen, belongs only to the southern tribes. A vivid description of the ceremony is found in the article by Chinnery and Beaver in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. xlv, 1915. It does not occur frequently, and it was not my good fortune to witness a full performance. I shall, therefore, take the liberty later on of quoting at some length from the above-mentioned source, for Mr. Chinnery not only saw the ceremony enacted among the Koko people of the Upper Yodda valley (Hunjara tribe), but 'was to a certain degree initiated himself into the Kokos'.

The candidates are of both sexes. On a recent occasion (at Wasida) there were, for example, seven boys and two girls; in another instance, nine boys and four girls. Those who [561] pass through initiation and seclusion together constitute something like an age-group; and one member will refer to the rest as *nanamei*, 'my children', i.e. 'the children of whom I am one'. The age of the candidates is variable. Normally